

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, JUNE 27,  
2017

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 2 p.m., Tuesday, June 27; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; finally, that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business for debate only, with Senators permitted to speak therein.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of our Democratic colleagues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Connecticut.

#### HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am proud to be on the floor today, proud to stand with my colleagues, and I hope that at the end of this week, I will be proud of all of my colleagues when we vote to defeat this measure, or at least to delay it, because we owe the American people the right to be heard.

Our responsibility as elected representatives is at the very least to listen. I have been listening over the last week but really over the last year to constituents of mine in the State of Connecticut and over the last week at two emergency field hearings that I conducted because no hearings were held by the Senate and no markups and no votes in committee. What we saw here in Washington was complete secrecy, a bill produced behind closed doors, only seeing the light of day for the first time last Thursday.

Our Republican colleagues have gone from total secrecy to total chaos. The reason for the chaos is the facts that were most dramatically revealed today—just hours ago—when the Congressional Budget Office told us, not surprisingly, that 22 million Americans would be thrown to the wolves as a result of this measure—thrown to the wolves of no healthcare coverage—and eventually 49 million Americans would be without healthcare insurance by 2026.

Next year alone, 15 million more people will be uninsured under the Republican plan, TrumpCare 2.0. Low-income Americans would be unable to afford any plan at all, and anybody who does would be paying higher costs for fewer services of lesser quality. Americans will pay a higher share of their income

and receive less as a result. A 64-year-old making almost \$57,000 will go from paying \$6,800 under the Affordable Care Act to \$20,500 under the proposal before this body. This jump in cost is absolutely staggering.

It will destroy the financial well-being of middle-class Americans who also, when they need nursing home care, after they have exhausted their savings, will be thrown to the wolves. I visited one such facility just last Friday, where two-thirds of its 60 beds will be unaffordable when those middle-class families find their savings will no longer cover it.

These facts are the reason for the Republican chaos. One of our former colleagues, my mentor, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, famously said: "Everybody is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts." The administration's statement that the CBO is not to be blindly trusted—nobody has to trust the CBO blindly. Those facts are driven by reality. Their report speaks truth to power and to the American people, and the American people get it.

None of us can look our constituents in the eye, look ourselves in the mirror, look inside ourselves, in our hearts, and justify a vote for this bill. The American people are angry, many of them because we are even considering it. It is not an anger that is kind of a shrug of the shoulders; it is a deep, vocal, vehement, vitriolic anger. I have seen it and heard it at those hearings, where I listened to people coming forward and talking about this bill, recognizing it for what it is. It is not a healthcare bill; it is a massive tax cut for the wealthy.

Just Friday afternoon, one of the folks who attended the hearing came to the microphone and said: Don't call it a healthcare bill; it is a wealth care bill. In fact, she is absolutely right. This bill cuts hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes for the richest so that they will do better, but it also cuts \$800 billion in Medicaid spending and investment to provide for that kind of tax cut. It is not a healthcare bill; it is a wealth care bill. And for most Americans, it is a catastrophic, cruel, and costly insult to their intelligence, their health, and our American values. It is a sham and a charade, making possible those cuts for the rich—tax cuts for them—at the expense of our most vulnerable citizens. And it has been the result of a profoundly undemocratic process—secrecy and speed.

Despite the best efforts of our Republican colleagues to keep Americans in the dark about what this proposal would do, I have seen growing awareness, again, not only at these hearings but as I walk through the airport, as I march in parades—twice over this weekend—as I attend public gatherings. Whether it is Boys State, sponsored by the American Legion for 16- and 17-year-olds, or nursing facilities for elderly citizens, there is a growing awareness that this bill is bad—profoundly bad—for the American people.

The people I have heard from have prescriptions to fill, appointments to make, lives to live, but they have come to these hearings on very short notice in Hartford and in New Haven, literally filling rooms so that there was standing room only.

I challenge my colleagues to hold the same kinds of hearings, to delay this vote so that they can go home at the end of this week and hold hearings in their State and listen to their constituents about what they have to say and what the consequences will be.

Nearly 1 in 10 veterans has Medicaid coverage, meaning that a staggering 1.75 million veterans, including 18,000 veterans in Connecticut, would be impacted by these reckless cuts. Let me repeat that number for all of us who rejoiced in the recent Accountability and Whistleblowers Act. Some 1.75 million veterans—18,000 of them in Connecticut—will be harmed by this reckless and needless insult and injury.

Put simply, this bill would make it hard for veterans with mental health disorders like post-traumatic stress disorder to get care. Nearly a quarter of all veterans receive care for mental health disorders outside the VA system, meaning they rely on protections that guarantee their access to affordable care. Under this proposal, those protections would be severely threatened, and the veterans who need that care would see that care at risk.

Here we are talking about a choice program that enables veterans to seek care outside the VA system, privately, and we are endangering care for millions of Americans—veterans—who need and seek it by using Medicaid.

If my colleagues listen to their constituents, they will hear from many of the people who have come to my townhalls, like Christine Girassi. Christine has two beautiful 4-year-old twins named McKenzie and Cameron. McKenzie was born with Prader-Willi syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that her mom described as "including low muscle tone, seizures, temperature instability, sleep apnea, infertility, OCD, intellectual disabilities, and developmental delay."

In the first few weeks of her life, McKenzie was in the hospital for 57 days, accounting for \$2 million in costs. Their family was spending \$30,000 a year to help their daughter thrive. So when Christine learned that her daughter had received a waiver to become a Medicaid beneficiary, she was overjoyed.

Christine told me:

When we received McKenzie's diagnosis, we were told that she wouldn't do a lot of things, and at only 4 years old she's already defying the odds. I have no doubt in my mind that if we are able to continue down our current path of the proper therapies and doctors, McKenzie will be able to have her fruitful life. I am terrified if the rug comes out beneath her that she will become just another statistic.

Another statistic? There are enough statistics in that CBO report. We will hear a plethora of statistics on the